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# Regional Council Activity Report

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March 2, 2000



Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey

## Executive Director's Report

Controlling unhealthy dust remains a key concern in the Maricopa region, as we continue to await the approval of a revised plan for reducing particulate matter. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) fully expects that the Environmental Protection Agency will approve the revised plan — but not in time to prevent a first set of restrictions from taking effect March 2nd.

MAG submitted the strengthened dust plan on December 23, 1999, after being notified in November that the EPA wasn't satisfied with the 1999 MAG Serious Area Particulate Plan for PM-10 (particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter). Although MAG submitted its revisions within days of the EPA's notice of an approvability problem, the EPA requires a lengthy review process and is not expected to approve the new plan until early April.

That means that for at least one month, major producers of dust or other particulates — such as power plants or sand-and-gravel operations — will be prohibited from starting up or expanding unless they can reduce their emissions by two pounds for every pound created.

Should the EPA fail to approve the revised plan by September 2, a second set of restrictions — loss of federal highway funds resulting in a conformity lapse — would occur.

Although approval of the revised plan is expected, the issue becomes further complicated by a potential lawsuit being threatened by the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest. Because our region is designated as a "Serious" nonattainment area for particulate pollution, under federal law the MAG plan must contain the most stringent measures feasible for the region. The Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest believes that the plan does not contain the most stringent measures, because the state legislature has failed to enact the strongest possible diesel fuel and agriculture measures.

If the Center files a lawsuit and the Court decides to vacate the EPA approval, the sanctions clock would start ticking from where it left off at the time of the approval. We may then be just a few months away from the loss of federal highway funds and a conformity lapse. Such a lapse would mean that all new projects of regional significance, even those funded by cities through local funds, would be halted.

What can cities do to help? Because the stringent measures in question are requirements which would have to be implemented by the State Legislature, at this point there is not much local governments can do except to lobby lawmakers about the importance of controlling particulate pollution in our region. In the meantime, we are grateful for the many committed measures we have received from municipalities, and the ongoing recognition from our Regional Council that this important regional health issue deserves our continued perseverance.



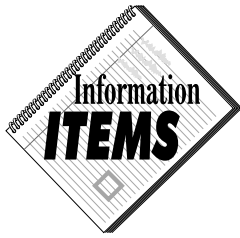
## **Regional Council Meeting Report for February 23, 2000**

### **Council Ratifies Revised Dust Plan**

As noted above, the Maricopa Association of Governments submitted a revised 1999 Serious Area Particulate Plan for PM-10 to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December of 1999. The submission followed a vote by the MAG Regional Council earlier that month to amend the FY 2000-2004 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include \$7.85 million for Maricopa County dirt road paving projects and \$3.8 million in funding for PM-10 certified street sweepers. These measures — along with a commitment by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to address the County dust control rules and strengthen the enforcement of the program — were included to address the approvability issues raised by the EPA.

In order to expedite the submission to the EPA, the plan was considered and adopted at the February 14, 2000 Regional Council Executive Committee meeting. During the February 23rd meeting of the Regional Council, the Council voted unanimously to ratify the Executive Committee action.

For more information, contact Lindy Bauer, MAG Environmental Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.



## Information Items

### Valley Vision 2025 Releases Report

After two years of tapping into the Valley's community consciousness to identify the region's values and visions, the Valley Vision 2025 Committee has released the "Valley Vision 2025 Report" — a comprehensive look at the work of the Committee during its journey toward a regional Vision plan. During the process, citizens identified the need for a quality transit system, control of urban sprawl, and wise use of open space as their highest priorities for the region.

Valley Vision 2025 was initiated by the Maricopa Association of Governments, and the Valley Vision 2025 Committee began its work in January of 1998. During the next two years, the committee gathered information through three main sources: collaborative groups, thematic subcommittees and public forums.

Some of the remaining steps which need to be taken before the final Vision plan is complete include conducting a statistically-valid, random-sample telephone survey, establishing a joint public/private partnership, and developing implementation strategies and performance measures for the Vision.

The report was presented to the Regional Council at the February 23rd meeting. Additions and revisions to the document are expected following further collaboration with the private sector. Once implementation strategies are developed, the Regional Council could vote on the final Vision document. For more information about the Valley Vision 2025 Report, please contact Corey Cox, MAG Regional Development Manager, (602) 254-6300.

### Transportation Fair Provides Opportunity for Input

Valley citizens had an opportunity to tell decision makers what they think about key regional and state transportation plans during a Transportation Fair held Thursday, February 24th at the Central Station Transit Center. Agencies on hand to answer questions and take comments included the Maricopa Association of Governments, the Arizona Department of Transportation, Valley Metro and the City of Phoenix. A variety of colorful displays included maps and photos of bus and proposed light rail routes, and information about transit and transportation plans and programs.

For more information, contact Dawn Coomer, MAG Transportation Planner, at (602) 254-6300.

### **Regional Freeway Program in Fiscal Balance**

A review of the fiscal status of the MAG Regional Freeway Program finds that for the ninth year in a row, the Regional Freeway Program has been in fiscal balance. The 2000 Annual Report on the MAG Regional Freeway Program finds the Program has achieved this balance without any project being delayed or eliminated due to financial constraints. According to the current schedule, all elements of the freeway program will be finished in 2007 with the exception of the connection of the South Mountain Freeway to I-10 on the west side. Cost increases due to inflation have been accommodated within available funding because of sound revenue forecasting. In addition, the financial participation of MAG member jurisdictions and enabling legislation for additional financing techniques have allowed for the significant acceleration of the freeway system.

The purpose of the annual report is to provide the public a review and evaluation of the MAG Regional Freeway Program. The review and evaluation should enhance the confidence of the public and ensure that the program stays in balance and on schedule.

For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, at (602) 470-1107.

### **Joint Agency Public Hearing Held March 2nd**

A Joint Agency Public Hearing was held on Thursday, March 2, 2000 at the MAG offices, 302 North 1st Avenue, Phoenix.

The event marked the first time input has been sought jointly by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), and the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) under a new, cooperative regional planning process. The integrated planning and programming process is designed to create a single, seamless process involving all types of transportation. Participants were given the opportunity to provide input on several plans, including:

- MAG FY 2001-2005 Transportation Improvement Program (five-year plan), which includes three key components:
  - ADOT Tentative Five-Year Transportation Facilities Construction Program
  - MAG Area Life Cycle Program for the MAG Regional Freeway System FY 2001-2007
  - RPTA Short Range Transit Plan
- MAG FY 2000 Long Range Transportation Plan (20-year plan)

A number of participants provided input on the proposed widening of the Superstition freeway in Mesa and Tempe.

For more information, contact Dawn Coomer, MAG Transportation Planner, at (602) 254-6300.



## Upcoming Events

### Desert Peaks Nominations Being Accepted

The Maricopa Association of Governments will be accepting nominations for its Desert Peaks Awards program through March 31, 2000. Nominations for the Awards are accepted in five categories: Public Partnership; Public-Private Partnership; Distinguished Service; Regional Partnership; and Regional Excellence.

The Desert Peaks Awards are intended to recognize MAG member agencies, groups, projects and individuals committed to promoting, recognizing, demonstrating and attaining the ideals of regionalism.

The Awards ceremony will be held on Wednesday, June 21, 2000 (a change from the originally scheduled date of June 28) at the Phoenix Airport Marriott Hotel. The dinner and awards program will follow the Regional Council Annual Meeting. The meeting begins at 5:00 p.m. with the dinner and awards scheduled from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

For more information about the Awards or to request nomination forms, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Communications Program Manager at (602) 254-6300.

### Forum Promotes Alternative Fuels

On April 25, 2000, MAG will host "Arizona Alternatives: Clean Fuels for Clean Cities." The forum is designed to promote, celebrate and showcase alternative fuel programs. The first-ever statewide forum will be held at Centennial Hall in Mesa and will recognize the achievements of stakeholders in supporting and encouraging the use of alternative fuels. The forum will also provide a chance for citizens to learn more about the benefits of driving an alternative fuel vehicle.

The forum is split into two categories: events and discussions aimed at alternative fuel providers, fleet managers, Clean Cities stakeholders and other decision makers; and information booths and displays designed to teach the motoring public more about alternative fuels and how they can be used.

One display will feature a 'ride and drive' where participants can drive or be driven in a variety of alternative fuel and advanced technology vehicles. Vehicles range from an electric Porsche to passenger cars to electric bikes. Types of alternative fuels showcased will include natural gas, propane, electric, hydrogen and solar.

MAG will be offering any non-used display space to member agencies free of charge. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, contact Anne MacCracken, Clean Cities Planner, (602) 254-6300.

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next Regional Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 22, 2000 at 5:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Ave., Suite 200. Agenda items will include approval of the Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan for conformity analysis. Discussion is expected to include the widening of the Superstition Freeway through the Cities of Tempe and Mesa. Additional agenda items will include consultant recommendation for the MAG Videoconferencing System and recommended cutbacks in Social Services Block Grant funds.

For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.